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# SERMON

Preach'd at the

# FUNERAL

OF

Nrs. *ABIGAIL COSTIVELL*,  
Widow,

In the Church of *Little Brandon* in *Norfolk*.

By *JESSOP WEBB*, M. A. Rector of the  
same Church.

Printed as directed in her Will.

L O N D O N,  
Printed in the Year MDCXCV.



ST. HILARY

GENERAL

OF  
THE ABIGAIL COSTELLO  
Widow

In the Church of St. Hilary in New York.

By JESSOP WEBB, M.A. Rector of the  
same Church.

Printed as directed in her Will.

1800

Printed in New York

A SERMON preach'd at the Funeral of Mrs. *ABIGAIL COSTIVELL*, Widow.

REVEL. XIV. 13.

*And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.*

**I**N this Chapter we have the Lamb come to the Destruction of *Babylon*, who is described by his Company and Attendance, and the Success of his Advent, which is either the Ruine of the Enemy, (*ver. 10, 11.*) or the Happiness of his Friends, (as in *ver. 13.*) In the Text we have a Promise of Consolation, wherein I shall observe;

1<sup>st</sup>. The Promiser, God, set out by his Nature, *He is said to be a Spirit.*

2<sup>dy</sup>. The Recorder, *John*, who is set forth by his Effect, *I heard a Voice from Heaven.*

3<sup>ally</sup>. The Thing promised, *Blessed are the Dead*: With two Reasons why they are so:

1. *Because they rest from their Labours.*

2. *Their Works follow them.*

I shall not have time sufficient to run over all these, therefore omitting them, I shall fix my Discourse as this present Occasion requires : *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord.*

In which we have this Observation, That it is a blessed thing to *die in the Lord.*

Now to *die in the Lord*, is to die in the Faith and Fear, in the Favour and Love of Christ.

It is opposed here to Backsliders, who begin well, but end ill ; who begin in the Spirit, but end in the Flesh. As if he should say, it is a good thing to begin well, but better to end so. It is well that we have made a Profession, but better that ye hold it out to the end. He is not blessed that begins in the Lord ; but blessed is he that dies in the Lord. In *Eccles. 7. 1.* Solomon saith, that the Day of ones Death is better than the Day of ones Birth ; which I know not how to make good, unless we understand it, either of the Flesh which thinketh Death to be the end of all Evils, or else that this corporal Death is the entering into Life everlasting. This must be understood of the Children of God, for the Death of wicked Men is worse than the Day of Birth. It were happy for them, if they should never die, as it had been for Judas if he had never been born.

Some Antiquaries have given some Reasons why the Day of ones Death is better than the Day of ones Birth.

1. Because the Day of his Birth is the beginning of his Miseries, but the Day of his Death is the End thereof. A Man is born to suffer, as Sparks fly upward, saith *Job* ; but when he dies, his Miseries end ; *for then should I have been still, and been at Rest, Job 3. 13.* The Grave is the Receptacle of those Souls to keep them from the Oppressor and Avenger ; it secures them from the Blows and Stripes of the Persecutors, they sleep quietly from the Noise of Slander



Slander or Scandal. When they once lie in the Dust, their Bodies are freed from Sicknes and Diseases : Hunger and Thirst dwell not there ; neither is there any fear of any malignant Humour to make it look pale and wann ; only that Corruption that Mortality gave it, and Putrefaction which nothing escapes : There the Righteous rest from their Labours.

2. Because in the Day of our Birth we are born in Sin, and brought forth in Iniquity. That Original Filth that was moulded up in the Clay of our first Father, sticks close to our Bones, and renders us as miserable as that can make us.

But in the Day of our Death we die in the Lord, our Sins and our selves then shake Hands, and bid an eternal Farewel to one another. The Grave saith to our Sins, as God to the Sea, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.* It is the blessed Dying in the Lord that makes that Day better ; it is their departing in Peace, dying with a good Conscience, in the Fear, Faith and Favour of God, that renders that Day happy ; whereas the Day of the Death of the Wicked is more bitter than the Day of their Birth : For I may say of the Wicked whom the Son never kissed, that when they die they go to the Damned. That Day is the Beginning of Evil, for as Christ said to the penitent Thief, *This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise :* So he may say to the Wicked, *This Day shall ye be with the Devils in Hell.* As the Righteous die to live for ever, so the Wicked die to die eternally. From this Day of Death, of thine infinite Mercy good Lord deliver us. Blessed are they that die ! Why then so is *Judas* and *Caiaphas*, *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate* blessed ? Why then it is no matter how we live, if Blessedness will crown our Death. No, cursed are all those that die if they die not in the Lord. It is the dying

dying in the Lord that makes our Death blessed: Which Blessedness is nothing else but an Accumulation of many good things together which concur in the Death of the Godly.

*First*; It renders his Death sure and safe.

*Secondly*; Sweet and comfortable.

*Thirdly*; Good and honourable.

*Fourthly*; Advantageous and beneficial.

*First*; Sure: Whereas the Death of the Wicked is uncertain; they are to seek when they die: as for Example it is said of *Nero* that wicked Tyrant when he died, Whither wilt thou go, my Soul? or what will become of thee I know not. But the Souls of the Righteous, when they die, are committed into God's Hands; *Into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*, saith Christ. The Viper nor the Adder shall not hurt them. If God takes our Souls into his Custody and Charge, they are safe and sure.

*Secondly*; The Death of them that die in the Lord is sweet and comfortable. Death at worst is but a grim Servant, a lean pale-fac'd Messenger, to let the Child of God into his Father's House: or, like the Breathing of a rumified Sore, there may be a little Smart, but there follows a great deal of Ease. So the Death of the Godly may be full of Agonies and Grief, full of Dolours and Tortures, but there follows as much Ease and Tranquillity as before was Grief and Misery.

1. It is called a Sleep, for the great Refreshment it brings them: for as Sleep was ordained to cherish the Bodies after their Labours, so was Death to deliver the Righteous out of Troubles. In the 7th Chapter of the

*As* we read, *St. Stephen* in the Shower of Stones fell asleep, which was strange he should rest so quietly with the Noise of Stones about his Ears. Although sometimes they die in great Agonies, yet they die sweetly that die in the Lord.

2. It is called a Departure in Peace; *Luke 2. 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word.* Altho hitherto I have born about me the Rebukes of many, have carried about me the Marks of the Lord Jesus, yet my Mind is satisfied, my Heart is at Rest; let now thy Servant depart in Peace.

3. It is called a gathering to our Fathers: Good King *Josiah* was gathered to his Fathers. As the Wheat when it is ripe is gathered into the Granery; so the Righteous when they are ripe with good Works, when they are in the Prime and Well-liking, when they are fit for the Lord, then he gathers them to himself. It is to the Godly as an Harbour after a Storm (when the Mariner had many Fears and more Storms in his Voyage) is sweet and comfortable. So when the godly Man after he hath been tossed with the Waves of this troublesom World, when he hath escaped this Gulph of Fear, and the other of Despair, when he hath shunned this Rock of Vexation, and that Shelf of Calamity, how gladly doth he commit his crasie Vessel to that Harbour which will secure him from all these.

After the long and tedious Journey which the Wise Men took to seek him who was born the King of the Jews, the Text saith, *they rejoiced exceedingly.* Now if they rejoiced to have found him in a Manger, *Luke 2. 7.* what would they have done to have found him in a Palace?

Now

Now when the Godly Man dies, he finds Christ not with a Cross but a Crown; not in a Manger, but in those amiable Courts of Heaven, which must ravish his Soul with that beautiful Sight.

*Thirdly*; Their Death is good and honourable, fit and seasonable. When the Sinner dies in his Sins, he is like the untimely Fruit of a Woman, he shall never see the Son. When *Sisera* fled to the Tent of *Jael*, he said to her, If any Man ask for me, say I am not here: but she took a Nail and smote the Nail into his Temples, and so he died with a Lie in his Mouth; *Judg.* 4. 20, 21. Behold *Zimri* and *Cozbi* committing Fornication, as the last Exercise of their Lives, were slain by *Phinehas*, *Eleazar's* Son; *Numb.* 25. 8. Behold *Ananias* and *Sapphira* committing Sacrilege and Lying in their Hearts, fell suddenly down dead; *Acts* 5. 5.

Behold *Nicanor* raging against the Jews, caused his Troops to march and give Battel on their Sabbath, supposing that their Day of Rest would make him a better Market of the Enemies Blood. In whose Army there were some Jews, either compelled by Necessity or a voluntary Apostacy, who desired not to destroy so cruelly and barbarously, by reason that that Day was dedicated to Rest. To whom he blasphemously replied, Who is he that ordained that Day to Sloth? They told him it was the God of Heaven that had set it apart for his Glory. Whereupon he said, That that God of Heaven should content himself to make Laws in his own Dominions: But he that was Almighty on Earth, commanded them to march for the Business of their King. Whereupon when the Battel was ended, they knew that *Nicanor* lay dead in his Harness; and, as an Example to all Blasphemers, had his Head cut off from his Shoulders, and the



the Hand that he had stretched out against the Holy Temple of the Almighty hang'd up as a sad Spectacle to all the World, and his Tongue that had blasphemed God cut out, and given as a Prey to the Fowls of the Air;  
2. *Matt. 23.*

Thus unreasonable are all the Deaths of the Wicked, whose Lives have been a continued Series of Impieties; yet I never read of the Righteous, to whom a good Conscience is a continual Feast, that he died in his Sins. Although he dies in his tender Age, in his full Strength, or in old Age; although his Agonies were great, his Pains searching, and his Troubles many, yet he hath wip'd off the black Score of his Sins, by the Tears of a melting Heart, and so dies seasonably. Their Death is honourable; *The Name of the Wicked shall rot, but the Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance.* The Wicked while they live here, it is possible many admire them more for the Crumbs than their Persons, more for the Loaves than their Goodness, more out of Fear than Love: But when they die they go down to the Dust with Dishonour, and their Ashes are scarcely suffer'd to lie quietly. But the Godly, while they live, are persecuted, derided, hated of their Neighbours: So persecuted they all the Prophets; but when they were dead, then they built them Tombs and Sepulchres. *David* when he was alive, the very Drunkards made Songs upon him; but when dead, esteem him a Man after God's own Heart. *Joseph*, when he was in *Egypt*, they cast him into Prison; but when he slept with his Fathers, they mourned for him.

It is an Honour when a Man comes home from his Journey to be welcomed with great Attendance.



But when a Christian arrives to the end of his Heavenly Journey, his Angel will come to carry him into Heaven; Angels will be sent to usher them into the Presence of his Father, who is a great Honour for a Christian to be known as the Father's Son in his Father's Kingdom; and then will he know what a good Subject he hath been to him; and thus and thus hath he done for us, regard him as it seems in thy Pleasure. So Christ calls his faithful Servant, and brings him to the Presence of his Father, tells him what Gain he hath made of his Talent, and desires him that he may enjoy the Joy of his Master.

Secondly, and Lastly, Their Death is advantageous and beneficial to them to live in Christ, and to die in Him, Phil. 1. 21. *He that loseth his life for my sake shall save it, and he that forsaketh Father or Mother for me, shall receive an hundred fold; and shall possess these things that shall never corrupt, shall be their Reward.* Godliness is great Gain both in this Life and a future Estate, it affords us a necessary Supply of all our temporal Wants, it procures us a good Name abroad, and a good Conscience within us; yet these are but the first Fruits of our labours, we only sow in Corruption, but we reap the Harvest in Incorruption.

And in our future State, when this Mortal shall have put on Immortality, at the second Coming of Christ; 1. Thess. 4. 16. *And the Dead in Christ shall rise first, and then live with him, and live with him for ever: These are the things that make the Death of the Righteous profitable.*

1. They shall live with Christ.
2. They shall live with Christ.
3. They shall live with Christ for ever.

**Live!** Wicked live and have Riches and Possessions, and so do the Beasts that perish. Is it such a Matter to live? No, not in Sensuality and Lust: in this Case it is better to die than to live. But they that die in the Lord live with Christ, not in the Tents of Ungodliness, nor in the Habitations of *Mesech* but the King's Palace, amongst Scepters and Crowns, Stars and Intelligences, with Angels and Archangels, and all the Host of Heaven. They live with Christ not for a Moment or a Month, nor for thousands of Days or Millions of Years, but for ever. If one Day in God's Presence is better than a thousand Days we now enjoy, how much better will a thousand Years be than one Day? The natural Body that is nourished with external Aliments and natural Food, no longer than it last than they uphold it: when they decay, Man turns to his Dust. He that lives upon the Creature, when that perisheth he fadeth. He that lives upon his Credit, if that dies he cracks; but they that die in the Lord live for ever.

Let a Man go into a Garden that is never so great, taste his Pleasure and Pastime, wallow in Beds of Roses, yet he must retreat and go out again. He that hath a good Lease for two or three Lives, it will end at last, Time concludes all things: But they that die in the Lord, the Clock of Time strikes Eternity to them, they live for ever. Now if you are curious to know the Reason how this comes to pass, be it known unto all here present,

that the Death of the Righteous is a great part of his Jointure. There is a Marriage between Christ and the pious Soul; when the Soul is given to Christ, the Jointure is made to the Soul; 1 Cor. 3. 21, 22, 23. Therefore let no Man glory in Man, for all things are yours, whether *Paul*, or *Apollo*, or *Cephas*, or the World, or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Behold here is a large Enfeoffment, a greater Dowry than the Devil promised to our Saviour Christ: if he would vouchsafe to honour him with his bended Knee, if he would fall down and worship him, he promised him the Gift of the whole World: Yet he doth not say, Life and Death, Hell and the Grave, Things present, and Things to come, are yours. Consider then our Saviour Christ suffered for our Sins, underwent the heavy Wrath of his Father's Displeasure for us. He was the Scape-goat, who having the Sins of the whole World cast upon him, went into the Wilderness, insulted over the Devils, triumph'd over the Grave, and led Death captive in spite of her Sting: *O Death, where is thy Sting! O Grave, where is thy Victory!*

Thus when he had suffered in *Golgotha*, where his Blood run down upon the Graves of the Dead that were buried there, he lay down in the Grave himself: Thereby so perfuming it, that we may safely lie down in that Bed which his blessed Body lay in; from whence it is that they that die in the Lord are blessed, that is, freed from that Curse that *Adam* brought upon them. But here some may say, How is their Death that die in the Lord blessed? for oftentimes their Pains are so great, that it makes them senseless; their Miseries so searching, as makes them shrink under their Burden; and their Dis-

cases

eases sometimes so noisom, as bereave them of the Comfort of their Relations. Now is their Death that die thus comfortable and blessed? I answer, Although the Old Man decays day by day, yet the New Man encreaseth: And although their Bodies may smart with Sores, yet their Souls may be comforted with the Joy of the Spirit. Although *St. Paul* carried in his Body the Marks of the Lord Jesus, when in danger of his Life, yet he is comforted with the Hopes of a Resurrection. The more sharply their Bodies are tormented, the sooner are they freed from their Pains, and the sooner is their Soul delivered from the Burden of the Flesh. Have we not read of those Martyrs that daunted the Malice of their Persecutors in the midst of Flames, their greater Joy over-ruling these lesser Pains? What although their Agonies be so great that they take away their Sense, when their Souls are ravish'd with the Contemplation of those more generous Joys they are presently to be Mistresses of in Paradise? And what if their Bodies be ulcerated with Sores and Putrefactions, if in Patience they possess their Souls?

It was the Saying of a good Man, that if his Father should send for him by the meanest Servant he had, yet will I go. The most loathsom Disease imaginable is a Servant of God, sent from our heavenly Father to bring us to him. Let our Sickness be never so, it brings us to our heavenly Father. We will go, Lord, we will go to thee, for thou hast the Words of eternal Life. We may see here the happy Condition of the pious Soul, let his Life be what it will, yet his Death is blessed. The Wicked while they live are inclosed in their own Fat, they come into no Danger like other Men; they talk of Vanity every one with his Neighbour, and their Blasphemies



mies are against the most High. Lo, these are they that prosper in the World, and have Riches in Possession: Here they have the World in a Sling, and do even what they list; while the pious Soul, to whom it is Meat and Drink to do the Will of his heavenly Father, is tormented and distressed, of whom the World is weary: yet in their Deaths one is comforted and the other tormented. And if there be so much Happiness in his Death, what abundance of Peace, Joy and Comfort is there for him in the Life to come? *If the Light* (saith Christ) *that is in thee be Darkness*, that Darkness must need be great. So I say, If the worst piece of a Christian's Life be blessed, what Heart can conceive the best? Let this then be instilled into the Hearts of all that want the Comfort of a godly Life; and if you repent not, ye shall want the Comfort of a godly Death. For most certain it is, that blessed is the Death of the godly Man, while cursed are all those that forget God, and go down to the Hell in their Sins.

2dly. If the Death of the Just be so blessed, then there is no Reason why we should mourn and grieve at their Departure. Let the Dead be mourned for, yet not those that die in the Lord, not those that have made their Peace with God; but let such Dead be mourned for that go from one Torment to another, from the Wicked in this Life to the Damned in Hell, from their Sins on Earth to their Punishment in Flames, that go from Death to Death. When *Abalom* died, *David* wept for his Friend, but it was because he died in his Sins: Although he had a fair Body, he had a foul Soul. But when his Child died, he rejoiced, rose up, and washed himself, and eat Bread. It is hard for dear Friends, for near Relations, to part with one another, to see the Corps of a Father or a Mother, a  
Hus-



Husband or a Wife, &c. lie upon the cold Floors, without the Expression of some Tears. It is hard to stop the Floodgates of Nature, Flesh and Blood is too weak to master our Passions. Sorrow we may, weep we may, but not without Hope, for them that *sleep in the Lord*.

To conclude therefore, If the Death of the Godly be so blessed, as it requires our Joy to perfect their Felicity, let us wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, since after they have lived the Life of Nature they are to live the Life of Glory: Since their Life was a Probation of those Patterns and Precepts Christ left them to keep and observe: Since they have gained so much by their Talent that was entrusted to them, in spite of any Opposition, never let it grieve us, that they now enter into their Master's Joy. Now if their Death, and only theirs is blessed, why then, O all ye that forget God, endeavour to make your Lives answerable to theirs. Every one of you, like the Sons of *Zebedee*, desire to sit with Christ in his Kingdom, but none shall sit there but such as can drink of his Cup: None but they that can suffer with him shall be glorified with him. Therefore let your daily Labour be, to conform your Lives answerable to his most holy Will and pious Examples, that your Death in his Name, and through his Merits, may be blessed for evermore. *Amen*

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